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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000849

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2024

TAGS: PREL PGOV KTIP SNAR PTER EFIN KCRM MASS AR
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: NEW JUSTICE MINISTER PLEDGES TO
CONTINUE LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 0802
1B. 2008 BUENOS AIRES 1173

Classified By: CDATom Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 6.

12. (C) Summary. Argentina's newly-appointed Minister of Justice Julio Cesar Alak pledged to continue bilateral law enforcement cooperation in a productive courtesy call meeting with CDA on July 21. During the meeting, the CDA briefed Alak on the many training programs and equipment donations the USG has provided to Argentina's internal security forces under the Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) purview. He stressed the USG's commitment to working in collaboration with the Argentine government to fight terrorism and transnational organized crime, including drug and human trafficking. An amiable interlocutor with a professional demeanor, Alak appeared genuinely interested in working with us and learning more about post's law enforcement cooperation with the GOA. He told the CDA that President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner had tasked him to solicit UN or World Bank technical assistance to develop a long-term public security strategy, and asked if the USG could help identify appropriate contacts within the UN or World Bank to approach. CDA agreed to do so, and suggested that the FBI, through its LEGAT office, and other USG law enforcement agencies could also provide technical assistance to support this effort. End Summary.

Atmospherics

13. (C) CDA called on newly-appointed Minister of Justice Julio Cesar Alak (ref A) on July 21 to review the vast array of law enforcement cooperation programs USG agencies offer to Argentina's internal security forces under the Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) purview. Like his predecessor, Anibal Fernandez, Alak met with the CDA and A/Polcouns alone, although he did call in a staffer at one point to delegate follow-up work and subsequently dismissed her. As the CDA briefed Alak on USG programs, Alak took notes on his laptop computer, saying "I am meeting the chiefs of the security forces soon, and I want to tell them that continuing these programs with the United States is a priority."

MOJ Receptive to Deepening Cooperation

14. (C) CDA began by noting the longstanding cooperation that USG agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Military Group, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the

Transportation and Security Administration have had with MOJ internal security agencies, including the Federal Police, Border Patrol, Coast Guard, and the Airport Security Police. He noted that DEA has worked closely with federal and provincial police officials in border task forces established in Misiones, Salta, and Jujuy. He informed Alak how DEA software donations helped federal police develop an organizational chart for the drug trafficking ring responsible for the ephedrine-related triple murder in 2008 (ref B). He invited Alak to designate participants for a variety of training programs offered in Argentina and abroad aimed at developing law enforcement capacity to combat terrorism, enhance border and aviation security, and fight the trafficking in drugs, arms, and persons.

¶5. (SBU) Alak seemed very receptive to continuing long-standing cooperation in these areas and more. He expressed particular interest in anti-terrorism training, saying that cooperation on this front is extremely important as "Argentina has twice been a victim of terrorism in the 1990s." He also told CDA that President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner had tasked him to solicit UN or World Bank assistance to develop a long-term public security strategy, and asked if the USG could help identify appropriate contacts within the UN or World Bank to approach. The CDA agreed to do so, and suggested that the FBI, through its LEGAT office, and other USG law enforcement agencies could also provide technical assistance to support this effort. In closing, the CDA wished Minister Alak success in his new position and assured him that the U.S. government will continue to work closely with the MOJ to deepen and expand bilateral law enforcement cooperation.

Action Request

¶6. (U) Action Request: Post requests State Department and Justice Department guidance on USG programs that offer technical assistance to countries seeking to develop public security strategies.

Bio Note

¶7. (C) Justice Minister Julio Alak is a traditional Peronist party (PJ) leader who served as mayor of Buenos Aires province's capital city La Plata for 16 years (1991-2007). After losing his reelection bid in 2007, CFK appointed Alak to the Board of Directors of Aerolineas Argentina (AA) and eventually became General Manager. At AA, Alak oversaw the (yet-to-be-completed) sale of the company from the Spanish-owned Marsans Group to the Argentine government. During the early to mid-1980s, Alak worked as a legal counselor to the Municipality of Florencio Varela, a traditional PJ bastion in Buenos Aires province. Alak worked as a journalist for La Plata's local paper "El Dia" to pay for law school and later served as a correspondent for the state-owned agency Telam in La Plata. A law professor, Alak is currently on a leave of absence from the University of La Plata, where he has taught administrative law. Press reports depict Alak as a pragmatic leader and note his ability to adapt to different federal administrations and ideologies, which has reportedly helped him gain the trust of leaders as different as former President Carlos Menem and Nestor Kirchner. Alak was born circa 1958 in the Benito Juarez district in Buenos Aires province. He received a law degree from the University of La Plata and has been a member of the Peronist party since entering politics. Alak is divorced, has three children, and is a fan of the "Racing" soccer team (which is also Nestor Kirchner's favorite club). As mayor of La Plata, he traveled to La Plata's sister city of Louisville, Kentucky, with 100 young soccer players.

Comment

¶8. (C) Alak struck us as a straight-shooter with whom we hope

to work well. He seemed favorably disposed to the United States, recalling happy memories of time spent in La Plata's sister city, Louisville, Kentucky when he was mayor; as well as travel to the "beautiful city of Los Angeles" and Miami with his (former) wife and daughters. An amiable interlocutor with a professional demeanor, he appeared genuinely interested in working with us and learning more about post's law enforcement programs. He is still assembling his team, and post intends to reach out to them to maintain a fluid working relationship with this key Ministry.

KELLY